

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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The state of New York is the first political body to recognize officially university extension. A legislature ostentatiously economical appropriated \$10,000 by a unanimous vote of both houses. A governor whose greatest boast is his reduction of the state tax hastened to sign the bill that he might pay the pretty compliment of making it a law upon the first University day.

This is remarkable enough to mean something. New York teachers can afford to look into this project that has so suddenly carried the state by storm.

I WHAT IT IS

It is, in the first place and distinctively, *higher* education. Its teaching is not how to earn bread and butter, but how to make leisure profitable. It is not, as Mr. Goschen says, a means of livelihood, but a means of life. "There is something about these university lectures," writes a carpenter quoted by Mr. Roberts, "different from science and art classes. I can't say exactly what it is, but they do more for you, and have more life in them." In other words, they uplift, they broaden the horizon, they open un hoped-for possibilities. A member of parliament said, not long ago, "It is changing the whole face of England. It is putting worthy ideas and aspirations into the minds of a great class hitherto neglected, and in return they are bringing to every vocation superior men, because of the opportunities for intellectual cultivation which they have enjoyed."

It aims to be precisely what its name implies, the extension of the university. "Education is ceasing to be regarded as a thing proper to particular classes of society or particular periods of life, and is coming to be recognized as one of the permanent interests of life, side by side with such universal interests as religion and politics. University extension is the university of the busy."*

"Whatever our use of this word 'university' it has in the past been always for the favored few. The task before us now is to make it an institution for the many. . . . If the water supply of a town were a source of sanitary danger, and miles away there was an inexhaustible stream of the purest

* R. G. Moulton

water, what should we do? Urge all the people to go there. But if after long trial it was found that only one in a hundred could spare time and cost to go to the mountain for water, should we not set about bringing the mountain to the people by means of aqueducts and pipes which make this seemingly impracticable thing possible at reasonable cost? This is exactly the problem of the university, and university extension means that we must carry through this great state conductors that shall bear to every thirsty soul supplies of the best that University has to give."*

2 ITS HISTORY

"You are all right so far as you go," said Frederic Denison Maurice in 1854 to the workingmen whom he had assembled to discuss the wrongs of their class, and the remedies, "but you do not go far enough. What you need is educated leaders, who can distinguish what is practicable and what is impossible in the way of social reform." So he founded the Workingmen's College, where graduates of Oxford and Cambridge conducted evening classes, not in the three r's but in the best things they had learned. "The name 'college,' " his son writes, "attracted him greatly. It seemed to him to imply an association of men *as men*—an association not formed for some commercial purpose, and not limited by coincidence of opinion." So he sought to recover the privileges of the universities from the few who had usurped them, for the many to whom they were originally extended. In the middle ages Oxford and Cambridge had such hosts of attendants that the long vacations were instituted to permit the students to go home and get in the harvest. In Scotland it has always been common for day laborers to take a college course in off-years of their work. So in the Workingmen's College tailor and shoemaker and carpenter and printer and engineer and blacksmith gathered evenings to study history and civics and political economy. The university was extended to them freely.

Twenty years later, in 1873, the university of Cambridge began a movement which has since been adopted by all the universities of Great Britain, and has within a few months been cordially endorsed by a hundred of the leading colleges of America. During the sessions of 1889-90, there were given in Great Britain 377 courses of 3,475 lectures, with an attendance of 379,377. In America the results are yet more remarkable. Not to speak of several subordinate movements on somewhat different lines, the Philadelphia society that grew out of a meeting held by Provost Pepper on Feb. 25, 1890, and began its lectures in accordance with the English plan on Nov. 3, held during the first season 42 courses of 250 lectures, with 50,000 attend-

* Melvil Dewey

ance. On Dec. 23, this organization was expanded into the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and will doubtless far surpass the record of England. New centers are springing up all over the land, and, profiting by the experience of Oxford and Cambridge, we are succeeding at a bound to results that it has taken them years to develop.

The rapidity of the growth of this idea reminds one of fairy tales. There are already many who believe that this new development of the university is its normal adaptation to the needs of the time. President Harper makes this feature one of the three equal departments of his new university in Chicago, and the general movement there under the leadership of Librarian Poole and others bids fair to be a striking phenomenon even in that city of phenomena. "Our educational machinery," says R. D. Roberts, "should include a system of higher education as wide-spread, all-embracing, and truly national as the system of elementary education." There are hundreds of sound thinkers who see in university extension a means of realizing this ideal.

3 ITS METHODS

The basis of University Extension is itinerant teachers. "The first university extension," says R. G. Moulton, "was the invention of printing, which sent the books itinerating through the country. The time has now come to send the teacher to follow the books." "So I mean to-night by university extension, the extension of the learning, culture, and methods of the university till every hamlet is reached by their uplifting influences, which, instead of being scattered where man has planted colleges, here and there like wells in a desert, shall reach throughout the length and breadth of the land, even as the waters cover the sea."

These teachers are not simply to lecture. "Experience has proved that the single lyceum lecture, however entertaining, accomplishes little in the way of education. . . . Education is a training in clear and continuous thinking, and to expect such training from the single lecture system would be like spending an hour in the gymnasium and looking for perceptible physical development."*

So the lectures are accompanied by four distinctive features: (1) an after-talk or discussion in which all present are invited to participate, asking questions freely; (2) a printed syllabus analyzing the lecture, calling attention to the main points, and suggesting the best books for reference; (3) the preparation by the hearers of lesson-papers to be examined, marked and criticised by the lecturer; and (4) the final examination and certificate. Here are united the reading, the talking, and the writing that Bacon found necessary to make the full, the ready, and the exact man.

* Melvil Dewey

Of course there is nowhere the possibility of compulsion. Many will attend the lectures for entertainment who will shrink from the labor of the rest of the plan. Indeed, "people's lectures," as they are called, have proved the most successful expedient in establishing university extension courses. A short series, say of three, is given in some large hall with free admission, the system is explained, and subscription tickets are distributed through the audience, to be filled out by those ready to enter the regular course. "Those who merely desire intellectual recreation attend the lectures only, while those who are real students are able by means of the classes, the weekly work, and the final examination to acquire a valuable mental training and a creditable knowledge of the subject."*

There is little work in this life without a reward in view. The reward of university extension work is its most distinctive feature—it is neither more nor less than actual university rank corresponding with that of resident students. This was a momentous undertaking for Oxford and Cambridge. "The importance of the step lay in the fact that the university deliberately placed its stamp upon the work done at local centers. It afforded the strongest proof, and one which would be intelligible to all, that the university had satisfied itself of the thoroughness and efficiency of the university extension method of teaching.

"So far as method is concerned," Mr Roberts, whom we have been quoting, continues, "we have considered that we are bound to be not less thorough but more thorough than the universities themselves, in proportion as our clients work under peculiar difficulties. But in the matter of curriculum, we have felt it our first duty to be elastic, and to offer little or much as may in each case be desired. Accordingly we have elaborated an educational unit—the three months' course in a single subject. . . . Certificates are given by the university, but it is an important arrangement that the certificates are awarded *jointly* as the result of the weekly exercises and the final examination. A student desiring the privilege of affiliation [equal rank with resident students in the university] is required to attend 8 courses of 12 lectures and classes each, to do regular work for the lecturer during the term, and to pass the examination at the conclusion of each course."

4 ITS APPLICATION TO NEW YORK

Experience has proved that the three great needs of this movement are a university headquarters, an abundant library, and a fund for the expenses of supervision.

University extension will be most successful when its work radiates from a university, first because the university is most likely to have a body of

* R. D. Roberts

competent teachers within call, and secondly because its certificate will have recognized value.

Now see the happy position of the state of New York. It has the most extensive university in the world, save only that of France, which directly copied its plan. Having charge of 25 colleges and more than 300 academies, and required to inspect not only the institutions themselves but their results as shown in examination papers in every subject of the curriculum, the University of the State of New York knows not only where there are good teachers, but where there are superior teachers in any special subject. Not having any small local faculty, to which it would naturally give preference, it can choose freely from all the teachers in the state the one best fitted to lecture on a given subject at any particular center.

As to certificates, fortunately this university has maintained so high a standard in granting degrees that these are already recognized as the most valuable that are conferred. In the university extension examination, it will of course justify the reputation already achieved, so that the certificates will be gladly accepted by any college in the land.

As to a library, the riches of the great state library under its control have never been dreamed of. Hear the librarian himself: "Some of you think your libraries are doing their full work. It is as if you had a fine pipe-organ which experts assure you is unsurpassed, but your organist is capable only of pumping out a few popular hymns. Some day a master of every stop and pedal will sit down to this same organ, and the divine music will seem a miracle to the old listeners."* The master of the instrument is on the bench now, and something of what a great library can do for the people of a state will be realized during the next five years, with especial felicity through the medium of university extension.

Finally, we have the needed fund for supervision. This is not to pay for the lectures or the printing or the necessary local expenses — each center must take care of these itself. But it is to see that no time or money is wasted, that no incapable lecturers are employed, that only the best books are recommended, that the movement is stimulated where there is most apathy because there is most need, that the entire work is systematized and correlated and directed toward the highest and most comprehensive results.

For this a sufficient initiatory fund has been provided, and that not by the private subscription of certain individuals but by the unanimous vote of the representatives of the people of the entire state. When before has so radical a movement started under such favorable auspices? If university extension is not a greater success here than it has proved anywhere else, it will be because the state neglects her exceptional opportunities.

* Melvil Dewey, at Convocation of 1889

It should not be forgotten that this principle of instruction is familiar to us under another name; that it has been tried for many years, and is now recognized as an essential part of our educational system. For what are teachers' institutes but normal school extension? Comparatively few teachers come to the normal schools, and so the normal schools are taken to the teachers. The table is spread so freely that Superintendent Draper has been zealous to see that the law went into the highways and hedges and compelled every teacher to come in. New York has to-day by far the best institute system known, and our experience in this cognate instruction will be of great use in establishing our system of university extension.

5 WHO WILL PROFIT BY IT?

Two classes : those who do want it, and those who do not.

There are a vast number who do want it. Look at the success of the Chautauqua circles. Look at the hundreds of teachers in New York who are to-day carrying on the non-resident courses of study in one or the other of two Illinois universities, getting degrees of inferior value from another state because New York makes no provision for them. Extend to our 30,000 teachers the privilege of degrees from the University of the State of New York, and there will be an amount and a quality and a wise direction of study that commissioners have never hoped for. The same is true in other professions, among business men, among workmen and laborers of every degree. We are a studious people, and it needs only a wise direction and a desirable end in view to concentrate upon established courses of study an amount of reading that is stupendous.

And yet the great work of university extension is among those who do not yet know that they want it. Do you realize that the working day which 20 years ago lasted 12, 14, 16 hours, is becoming universally eight hours? The workman has already a daily average of four hours more leisure than he had in 1870. No more serious problem confronts us than this: *How will he occupy this leisure?* Go back to the wise words of Maurice: "What you need is educated leaders, who can distinguish what is practicable and what is impossible in the way of social reform." Experience already proves that many of these educated leaders may be confidently expected through the movement for university extension, while working men as a class, finding the best of history and literature and philosophy and science thrown open to **them** freely and entertainingly, will direct into this avenue of self-improvement **the unexpended energy** which now produces only **unrest and discontent.**